

subsidy depends on the level of procurement of foodgrains, off-take under TPDS and various schemes involving subsidy. Both procurement and off-take are determined by the market prices prevailing in respect of agricultural commodities. There has been increase in procurement and reduction in off-take of foodgrains in 2000-2001, which are expected to contribute to a significant increase in buffer subsidy which is a constituent of food subsidy. The exact amount will be known after the close of financial year 2000-2001.

Poor functioning of Consumer Fora

139. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently the Supreme Court of India has commented on the poor functioning of the Consumer Fora constituted under the Consumer Protection Act;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Court has also directed the State Governments to take urgent steps so as to activate these Fora and make them functional as consumer friendly; and

(d) if so, the steps proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) to (d) In its recent interim observation in connection with a matter relating to the State of Uttar Pradesh, the Hon'ble Supreme Court noted the difficulties stated to have been experienced in the functioning of consumer forums set up under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 and asked the State Government to inform, in the next date of hearing, the steps taken by the State Government in this regard.

Among the steps taken by the Central Government for smooth functioning of the Consumer Forums and quicker disposal of cases are:

- (1) To strengthen the infrastructure of the Consumer Courts, Central Government has provided a one-time grant of Rupees sixty one crore and eighty lakhs to the State/UTs during the period 1995—99.
- (2) Monitoring the working of the Consumer Courts through the National Commission.
- (3) State/UT Governments have been requested to fill-up the vacancies of Members Presidents in various Consumer Forums on priority.
- (4) Central Government is regularly taking up with State/UT Governments for ensuring the smooth functioning of the Consumer Forums and close monitoring of their performance.
- (5) Amendment of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 from time to time.

Prices of Essential Commodities

140. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some programmes being implemented presently by Government to check rise in the prices of essential commodities have failed to the greater extent to have an effective impact;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor;